



Front Country Trails Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force

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Regular Meeting
Wednesday, June 2, 2010
5:30 PM

Santa Barbara County Administration Building
Planning Commission Hearing Room – 123 E. Anapamu Street, Santa Barbara

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER: Chair Perkins called the regular meeting of the Front Country Trails Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force to order at 5:32 PM at the Santa Barbara County Administration Building, Planning Commission Hearing Room, 123 E. Anapamu Street, Santa Barbara.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: By Chair Perkins.

ROLL CALL:

Task Force Members Present:

Suzanne Perkins: County Park Commissioner, 1st District
Beebe Longstreet: City Park & Recreation Commissioner
W. Scott Burns: City Park & Recreation Commissioner
Bruce Emmens: Public Use & Facilities Staff Officer, Los Padres National Forest
Jeff Bensen: Assistant Forest Recreation Officer, Los Padres National Forest

City Staff Present:

Jill Zachary: Assistant Parks and Recreation Director
Kathy Frye: Associate Park/Natural Areas Planner

County of Santa Barbara Staff Present:

Erik Axelson: County Parks Deputy Director
Claude Garciacelay: ASLA, Park Planner
Mark Guy: Ranger II
Jessica Opland: Administrative Professional

Los Padres National Forest Staff Present:

Kerry Kellogg: Wilderness and Trails Manager, Santa Barbara Ranger District

Front Country Trails Staff Present:

Rebecca Mordini: Front Country Trails Coordinator

CHANGES TO THE AGENDA – None.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Chris Orr commented on the 25th California Trails and Greenways Conference that was held in April in Cambria. Dave Everett thanked the Task Force for going through the process and likes their recommendations. He has been doing a lot of trail work since the fires and was surprised to see people using them recently.

TASK FORCE AND STAFF COMMUNICATIONS:

1. Approval of Minutes – For Action

Recommendation: That the FCT Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force approve the meeting of March 3, 2010.

Motion:

Task Force members Longstreet/Emmens to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of March 3, 2010, with the following revision:

1. First Page, under roll call, Rebecca Mordini was moved to Front Country Trails Staff Present.

Vote:

Unanimous voice vote (Dale absent).

OLD BUSINESS

2. Trail Maintenance Update – For Information

Recommendation: That the Front Country Trails Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force receives a status report on the FCT trail maintenance projects from Kerry Kellogg.

Documents:

- None.

Speakers:

- Staff: Kerry Kellogg, US Forest Service and Rebecca Mordini, Front Country Trails Coordinator.
- Members of the Public: Chris Orr.

Task Force Comments:

- Kerry Kellogg deferred this item to Rebecca Mordini, who incorporated it with item 3.

3. Outreach Update, Proposed Outreach Plan and Trail Count Project – For Action

Recommendation: That the Front Country Trails Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force receives a status report on outreach and trail maintenance activities, reviews Front Country Trails Outreach Plan, and approves the proposal for Trail County Data Collection.

Documents:

- Attachment 2
- PowerPoint Presentation
- Handouts

Speakers:

- Staff: Rebecca Mordini, Front Country Trails Coordinator; Erik Axelson, County Parks Deputy Director.
- Members of the Public: Chris Orr and Stephen Dougherty.

Task Force Comments:

- 1) Community Outreach: Task Force Member Burns thinks the Trail Star Program will be a success and it will be a nice and creative way to give public acknowledgement. Task Force Member Longstreet commented on the creeks division and how they are taking more ownership of creeks and working with the business community on a successful marketing campaign. Task Force Member Emmens believes this is a good recommendation in terms of getting people aware and not just through education. Task Force Member Perkins said businesses will be targeted to make contributions, whether it be towards specific trails for maintenance, etc. She asked if the Park Foundation would be a vehicle by which funds could be funneled through because we're obviously going to need a vehicle to handle donations and obviously it's going to need to be a 501C3 type of organization. Task Force Member Longstreet happens

to serve on the Park Foundation and she thinks that's exactly what the Foundation is set up to do. Erik Axelson said two logical 501C3 organizations would be the County Park Foundation and the City PARC Foundation and both are suitable for this purpose. Task Force Member Perkins said people like to be recognized, so we could have donor plaques at the beginning of the trails. Task Force Member Longstreet said to use the website to post information. Task Force Member Perkins thinks there needs to be a uniform look and it's something that everyone has to come to an agreement on. There would be a greater number of people that would be more likely to give money than to do the work. By making it more known to the public and actually having something for the public to see would stir more interest than not having something posted like some type of sign at the beginning of a trail head for ownership. It just creates more ownership that shows someone has contributed to this trail and people are more likely to give money. Rebecca Mordini said that staff will be looking into the issue of profit vehicles; who is best to take donations and how staff would set up a website. Many great ideas were mentioned on how to acknowledge the public and to keep their names out there.

- 2) Trail Maintenance: Rebecca Mordini announced that National Trails Day is Saturday, June 5th at Manning Park. Task Force Member Longstreet thanked the staff and volunteers who will be participating in this event. Task Force Member Burns asked how people could contribute for this day, for example, food and donations. Rebecca Mordini said that they could take collections at the site and give the donations to the person buying food. Task Force Member Longstreet said staff needs to explore setting up a fund with one of the Foundations for donations.
- 3) Trail Guidelines: Task Force Member Longstreet asked what type of picture the camera takes and does it get people going back and forth. Rebecca Mordini said the camera will be placed in an inconspicuous area. The location and time of placement will not be publicized. There are seven trails that will have three cameras placed in different locations. Task Force Member Burns asked if the camera was used by any other trail groups. Rebecca Mordini said she had heard about the camera at the trails conference. Several people in the audience said they have been using the cameras for a few years and have been very happy with them. Also, data collection is like manual count; someone will have to input the data into an excel spreadsheet; with the camera we have a digital record. Task Force Member Bensen asked what the methodology is for each agency to kick in money for the cameras at this point. Erik Axelson said the County is prepared to purchase the cameras out right and make them available for this purpose. Task Force Member Bensen commented that doing trail surveys and putting out counters takes staff time, who is going to maintain the cameras? Rebecca Mordini said she is hoping that the same staff that helps with staff maintenance, for example, the Forest Service and the County will be able to work it in with existing projects. The plan is to move them every two weeks; the batteries and SD card will last through that period and will not have to be changed. Task Force Member Perkins asked where the cameras will be placed because some of the trails are hard to get to. Rebecca Mordini said at the beginning, center and end. The most difficult camera to place will be the center one because that is the hardest place to reach and unfortunately we are not going to be checking them every day. It will be a limited amount of involvement in getting to that. Task Force Member Burns asked how many months the cameras will be in use. Rebecca Mordini said the initial data collection staff hopes to do this summer, which is why staff picked every two weeks. Staff can hit every trail before the September meeting. It will be summer usage data and it is recommended that we do another count in the spring. Task Force Member Burns asked if the camera has a time and date stamp. Rebecca Mordini said yes the camera will give a date and time which is great because it will give staff an idea of how many morning and afternoon users there are. Task Force Member Burns is in favor of this, but maybe in September talk about if we really want to do another survey. There seems to be a lot of issues on how subjective the surveys will be and they need to be done correctly. Task Force Member Perkins thinks that one of the reasons that staff is moving forward with the trail count first is to analyze the data and then determine whether staff needs to go on. She understands the need for this type of survey and thinks staff has to be very careful. It is going to be an expensive project so she thinks it's a matter of determining

where the money is best spent at this stage. Whoever is placing the cameras should have training and be experienced in the trails. Task Force Member Longstreet said once staff gets the counts on the trails it will be good information to use in grant writing. She is very supportive of getting this done this; it seems like a reasonable project that can be taken on. Staff can get some useful information and move forward.

Motion:

Task Force Members Longstreet/Bensen to except the proposal to use cameras on trails.

Vote:

Unanimous voice vote (Dale absent).

4. Trail Assessment Project – For Information

Recommendation: That the Front Country Trails Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force receives a report on the results of the pilot assessment of the Cold Spring Trail and provides direction on the scope of the full scale assessment project, including the parameters for data collection.

Documents:

- Attachment 3
- PowerPoint Presentation
- Handouts

Speakers:

- Staff: Jill Zachary, Assistant City Parks and Recreation Director; Kathy Frye, Associate Park/Natural Areas Planner; Erik Axelson, County Parks Deputy Director.
- Members of the Public: Chris Orr and Stephen Dougherty.

Task Force Comments:

Task Force Member Longstreet is concerned that the Task Force and staff do not have the expertise to come up with standards that haven't already been created. Standards should be done by professionals and when line of sight is reviewed, there are so many factors to look at, for example, how tall a person is, where are they on the trail, etc. One of the Task Force's charges is maintenance of the trails and that's something that can move forward and will provide some safety. Another concern is places to step out on trails. She does not want to see the Task Force or staff stall the information that can be gathered now and put to good use to move the other charges forward. Task Force Member Burns said concerning line of sight, step out, and drop off; that information could be received later after the original assessment is done because it might be necessary. He would like to go ahead with the assessment and also try to figure out how to do the other trail features at a later date, but is not sure how it is going to get funded. Task Force Member Emmens said he is glad to see the Task Force get to this point where we have a proposal to move ahead with the assessment. Width and steepness need to be assessed and then the other special features to be able to take a strategic look at all the trail systems. This will allow staff to look at where the best opportunities for certain types of use may be for later decisions. It is going to be more expensive, so a good idea is to have staff work with some of the stakeholders or a small sub-committee and maybe try to work on the idea of developing some definitions for those special features. Task Force Member Bensen said given some of the extreme slide slopes some of these trails have, it is going to be important to know what the drop off is. There should be a little more work done on what it is going to cost because in the long run, in many of these areas, it is going to be helpful to have. Task Force Member Perkins feels that staff needs to move forward with the special trail features. The Task Force may have to make up standards for Santa Barbara trails unless there are other jurisdictions on the coast that have the same type of trails that we deal with. Some trails are not going to be able to be multi-use, but if we do not do testing and if we do not come up with standards we are not going to get there. Task Force Member Longstreet asked what if the assessments show our trails are not safe. Are we prepared for that?

Task Force Member Perkins said it may come to the point that the trails are not safe for all three uses, but if there is no data to make that determination then this is all for not. Task Force Member Longstreet said it's not all for not because the other thing we've come together to do is to maintain these trails and to have policies, etiquette, and to promote sharing. Jill Zachary said that staff would have to come up with something that said, measure line of sight when it is less than so many feet. What staff would end up with is data based on those measurements, which would say if it was good or bad; it would be what the existing condition on the trail is. That is what we really want to be able to use this information for so that if this process moves forward, staff can determine what types of changes would happen on the trails, for example, whether it is who uses it, how it is used or what it looks like. Staff is struggling with what is the best way to get a baseline amount of information so when it is queried; there is enough information to have the dialogue wanted about standards and trail use. Task Force Member Perkins thinks it is important to get data from other jurisdictions and other trail user areas such as the Rocky Mountains because they have steep and narrow trails, but they also segregate bikers, hikers and equestrian in some areas. Erik Axelson clarified that staff was reluctant to make a recommendation about line of sight, which is not the case because it is so complex. Mark Guy and Kathy Frye have gone out on the trail and have tried to figure out what those standards would be, where you are and under what circumstances. Staff has queried other jurisdictions with similar types of issues. There is a good reason why there is a wide spread standard for line of sight because to the best of our knowledge it has not been invented yet. Drop off and step out are pretty straight forward features that could easily be incorporated into a proposal. From the analysis and outreach that has been done to other jurisdictions, they want to know when we come up with something. Task Force Member Perkins thinks that we have the capability of moving forward with trying to resolve it and trying to come up with set standards, she just does not want to cash it in and say lets not go there because its going to be too difficult. Task Force Member Burns said approximately nine months ago the Task Force said lets work with HETAP and then it was decided that it was not going to work, so it was done manually. It was then realized that that was not going to work either. The decision has already been made to do this and he does not want to get sidetracked as it is trying to expand. It sounds like if expanded, it will cost more money. He would rather go forward with what staff can do, realize with the recommendation and the acknowledgement we want to do more and we will try to do more later. Task Force Member Bensen said the three identified trail features are line of sight, drop off and step out and it sounds like step out and drop off are not so difficult. It may not be that hard, at each measuring point, to add in side slope and aspect. Erik Axelson said it would be additional information that would need to be inputted as part of the HETAP process, which would be more time consuming. The qualitative distinction between line of sight, which is extremely complex, and the other two features, which are much more straight forward, could be more readily applied. Task Force Member Bensen said with how much effort the staff and volunteers have put in with developing and learning this program, this can be deferred to their experience. Line of Sight could be deleted and drop off, side slope, and step out kept, if it will not cost too much. Erik Axelson said there might be a criterion where a trail that's less than 24 inches or less than 36 inches, where you would look for room for a step out at that location or is there a drop off that prevents a step out. That type of data for those particular features might be triggered by a particular condition of the trail itself. Jill Zachary said every time beneficial design's collects data they stop the machine, manually do it and then do the data entry. That is part of determining the standard they would use for data collection and the more stops, the more it would cost. There are trail standards, but changing those trail standards and then determining whether the trails meet those standards would not be beneficial. Task Force Member Perkins said the Task Force needs to discuss the trail standards that are in place and whether they support multi-use. Task Force Member Emmens said that if standards could be added to that is one thing, but assessment and the condition on the trails is another. He thinks that we're going to miss out if these three factors these special features are not looked at as related to multi-use trails. If you have a particular trail out there that has more occurrences than another, then we need to be able to identify one of the trails over another as a potential problem trail for multi-use. It's a matter of trying to understand what the conditions are before we think about standards.

Task Force Member Longstreet is aware of the conflict between bikers and hikers. She would also like to make sure it is kept broad based because there is also equestrian use, which may or may not be appropriate on these trails. There should not be any targeted user group or any further discussion before an assessment is completed and it is agendaized. Task Force Member Perkins thinks it is important for staff to use the three trail standards and incorporate the other additional trail specifications. Erik Axelson asked if he heard Task Force Member Perkins volunteer with Task Force Member Emmens on a subcommittee to wrestle with line of sight. Task Force Member Emmens does not think it is the Task Force's job to define line of sight; there are some staff that could lead this when it comes to experience, dealing with maintenance, and observing the uses and working with the users. The data collection is being done along stations and once completed you are gone. If staff were to have to go back to measure special features after doing the initial assessment, would that site be found by GPS? Jill Zachary said yes, that is what staff intended to do since the beginning of these discussions. The automated process would be used to get the base line and then volunteers and staff would go back and get the more difficult data. Staff would need to determine how to proceed with creating measurement standards for the purpose of data collection and who we would seek for expertise to assist us. We want to make sure if we move forward, what we get is information that then can be used in the discussion. Task Force Member Longstreet suggested an RFP be sent with basic information, asking for two estimates, one with basic and one with drop off and step out. If the RFP gets out with the basic assessment and added two features, maybe we can move forward and get started with other items as we move on. Task Force Member Burns said the 2.8 miles of cold springs has been done. One of the other trail features should be looked at to see how long it would take someone to do a mile of it. We could know if there is a drop off, does the drop off have to be five feet; does it have to be 12 feet; does it have to be 30 degrees? Those are the issues someone needs to come up with at least on a preliminary survey. Kathy Frye said that Mark Guy and she decided to use Cold Springs Trail for the assessment. They had the data in front of them, went out to locations, tried it and that was part of the process in trying to form a definition. We thought about it before hand and tried to apply just the preliminary definition out there and that short work provided more questions and provided more and more parts to the definition. We realized how complicated the definitions were especially trying to provide the information for a RFP for beneficial design's. We tell them what we want them to do; they are not going to make that decision. One thing we realized is that if we had more information about where the narrowest portions of the trails were, which that information could be gotten from HETAP, it would actually help in narrowing down where we could take that information. So if you ran a report and you found out that there were ten locations where your trail dropped below 24 inches, you could go back with the GPS point location, observe where there was a drop off or problem with line of sight and then use that ground to take your additional information. Task Force Member Emmens recommended that the Task Force agree to move getting the basic assessment data done, but still deal with the issue of definitions. Task Force Member Perkins said there are certain portions of each trail that are more problematic than others and everybody that uses those trails know the problem areas. When I've been on horseback, I know when I'm coming up to a really tricky area and I start preparing myself and listening. Why can't HETAP know? We could use something to identify the areas and just try to come up with some standards, maybe not do a full on depth approach to the different conditions that we want measured, but just say there are particular problem areas and their pretty obvious. Task Force Member Longstreet asked if the data would show those problem areas. Jill Zachary said certainly we can go away and explore how that might work out as part of the trail assessment. I would rely on staff that has been in the field. How would we approach this if we were to ask special design's as part of their survey process? Staff cannot answer that right now, but we can certainly have that discussion. Task Force Member Perkins said when people use certain trails many times it gets engrained in your brain when you're coming up on a particular area. If we cannot take some of those things into consideration because you cannot tell by just looking at it, it is not going to give you a good story of the problem areas. Jill Zachary said staff will take all the discussion and mull over how staff might move forward.

NEW BUSINESS

5. Schedule Work Session for Trail Standards – For Action

Recommendation: That the Front Country Trails Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force discuss the date and scope of the proposed work session for Trail Standards.

Documents:

-None.

Speakers:

-Staff: Erik Axelson, County Parks Deputy Director.
-Members of the Public: None.

Task Force Comments:

Task Force Member Perkins thinks staff is going to need all the time they can get. She does not think it would be beneficial to schedule it any sooner than September. Erik Axelson asked the Task Force how the format of the meeting as a work session should be. Task Force Member Burns said if it is done like a work session it would be easier to get general public members to sit around a table. This way the Task Force will get a lot of good comments that sometimes are not heard in standard meetings. Task Force Member Longstreet thinks that brings it down to more of a working group level of trail users and maybe scheduling something with that group would be beneficial, but as far as the work session with this body trying to do that we could have 100 people there so I'd leave it up to staff to come up with the format. Jill Zachary said that the Task Force may want to have a community workshop after the work session, which may be where we go next. Task Force Member Perkins thinks the Task Force needs some data before tackling standards. Task Force Member Longstreet said she knows that we have a lot of data already so would rather be able to go back and look at the stuff we have and build on that. Also, a big concern is the budget and staff time as the process moves forward because this could be a full time project. Task Force Member Bensen thinks that there needs to be some kind of workshop and staff can come up with a workable format on how to do it because he does not think it could be done as a regular meeting. Task Force Member Emmens said to leave it to staff.

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:58 PM, with no further business to come before the Task Force, the meeting was adjourned to the next scheduled meeting, to be held on September 1, 2010, at the Santa Barbara County Administration Building, Planning Commission Hearing Room, 123 E. Anapamu Street, Santa Barbara.

Motion:

Task Force members Longstreet/Emmens to adjourn the meeting.

Vote:

Unanimous voice vote (Dale absent).

Respectfully submitted,



Erik Axelson
County Parks Deputy Director